



March 1, 2005



## Woonsocket man pleads guilty in “drugs for guns” trade

**Eric Mitchell**, of Woonsocket, has pleaded guilty to a federal drug-trafficking charge, admitting that he traded about 14 grams of crack cocaine for two handguns.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Mitchell entered yesterday before U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith in U.S. District Court, Providence. Mitchell is detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for May 20.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen G. Dambruch said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that agents for the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** (ATF) monitored Mitchell’s attempts last June to obtain handguns in exchange for drugs. On June 14, Mitchell met a man in the parking lot of a convenience store in Woonsocket, where the man showed Mitchell two handguns that ATF agents had supplied him.

Agents observed Mitchell then drive to his home and, a short while later, return to the convenience store parking lot, where he gave the man a package containing 13.24 grams of crack cocaine and the man placed the handguns in Mitchell’s car. Agents arrested Mitchell as he got into his car to leave.

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Mitchell, 24, of 302 Park Avenue, Second Floor, pleaded guilty to one count of distributing more than five grams of cocaine base. The penalty prescribed by statute is five to 40 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$4,000,000.

**ATF** and **Woonsocket Police** investigated the case. The federal prosecution by Assistant U.S. Attorney Dambruch resulted from a joint review of the case by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office.

The joint review of firearms cases is part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate those responsible for gun violence and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, federal firearms prosecutions in Rhode Island have more than doubled and gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 550 years in federal prison.

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